

Appl. No. 10/070,303
Amdt. dated July 6, 2004
Reply to Office action of April 6, 2004

REMARKS

The examiner rejected claims 1-4 and 10 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,759,618 (Kamata). The examiner rejected claim 5 as being obvious in view of Kamata in combination with U.S. Patent No. 4,420,987 (Heinz). The examiner rejected claims 6-8 and 11 as being obvious in view of Kamata in combination with U.S. Patent No. 4,909,644 (Owens).). The examiner rejected claim 9 as being obvious in view of Kamata in combination with Owens and Heinz. Applicant respectfully traverses such rejections.

Independent claim 1 recites a separator comprising at least three spacers positioned circumferentially about a given axis and at least spirally configured and interconnected, each spacer having a first end and a second end, the first end of each spacer being axially spaced from the second end of an adjacent spacer with each spacer configured to be positioned within a respective one of the pairs of spiral raceways. The examiner indicates that Kamata teaches three spacers positioned circumferentially about an axis with each spacer configured to be positioned within a respective one of the pairs of spiral raceways. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Kamata explains in column 3, lines 1-9 that the outer surface of the lens holder 16 is provided with a cam follower in the form of projection 16a and that the inner surface of the sleeve is provided with a cam follower in the form of a projection 2c. The projections 16a and 2c are configured to follow the respective camming grooves 20a and 20b. The camming grooves 20a and 20b are not spacers. Furthermore, the camming grooves 20a and 20b are not configured to be positioned within a respective pair of spiral raceways. The camming grooves 20a and 20b are not positioned between any raceways and in fact each only engages one element, namely the respective projection 16a or 2c. Additionally, the camming grooves 20a, 20b and the projections 16a, 2c are only configured for following, not transmitting force. One looking to increase the axial force of an axial actuator as in the present invention would not look to the minimal force transmitting configuration of Kamata.

Claims 4 and 8 of the present invention further recites that the at least three spacers are defined by three spiral surfaces with the spiral surfaces secured between concentric cylindrical sleeves. The examiner indicates that Kamata shows two concentric cylinders, indicating that

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element 2c is part of a cylinder. However, the examiner does not indicate that the alleged spacers are secured to both sleeves as recited in claims 4 and 8.

Claim 6 of the present invention further recites that the at least three spacers comprise a cage comprising rolling elements conventionally connected thereto. The examiner acknowledges that Kamata does not teach rolling elements. The examiner cites Owens as teaching rolling elements. There is no teaching or suggestion to combine the rolling elements of Owens with the camming grooves of Kamata. The camming grooves of Kamata provide a simple cam track for the projections to follow. There is no suggestion to provide rolling elements in the cam following tracks.

It is respectfully submitted that pending claims 1-11 are in condition for allowance. Early reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

If the examiner believes an interview, either personal or telephonic, will advance the prosecution of this matter, it is respectfully requested that the examiner get in contact with the undersigned to arrange the same.

Respectfully submitted,



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